

Mozart: A Musical Advocate

by

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## ABSTRACT

W.A. Mozart was a masterful creator of music and drama as well as a keen observer of human relationships. Librettists were enamored of his ability to bring their words to life with his music. His truthful portrayal of human relationships, particularly involving women, was highly influenced by his own life experiences. Through these relationships he learned to create characters and music that clearly depict female sibling relationships in the eighteenth century. A review of educational opportunities for women during the eighteenth century, Mozart's personal relationships, as well as selected roles in his operas will help to explain Mozart's portrayal of the eighteenth-century female sibling stereotypes. While Mozart's self-centeredness is well documented in biographies by Cliff Eisen and Ruth Halliwell, and the argument can be made that he surrounded himself with females who fulfilled his needs, he was often drawn to operas in which he could advocate musically for a female character's liberation from the overbearing influence of powerful men. Although Mozart's "musically empowered" women appear in nearly every opera, for the purpose of this paper, I will focus on the characters of *Così fan tutte*'s Fiordiligi and Dorabella, and *Le Nozze di Figaro*'s Countess. First, however, a closer analysis of Mozart's early life and his relationships with his sister and mother is necessary. The ways Mozart set characters created by DaPonte and Beaumarchais cannot be separated from the ways he was taught to appreciate females in his family of origin. Social structure during the eighteenth century dictated a woman's education, responsibility to her family, and therefore, played a fundamental role in defining her life. This

situation often created expectations within the birth order that had an impact on sibling relationships as well as individual personalities. Many social and familial influences are represented through the operas of Mozart. *Così fan tutte* (January 26, 1790) and *Le Nozze di Figaro* (May 1, 1786) both contain a central female sibling relationship that reflects aspects of Mozart's relationships with women throughout his life.

## DEDICATION

To the circle of people who believed in me when I no longer believed in myself.

They are: Nancy Walker, Rod Walker, Hallie Winters, Matthew Larson,

Jenn Newman, and Jim Newman.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

W.A. Mozart was a masterful creator of music and drama as well as a keen observer of human relationships. Librettists were enamored of his ability to bring their words to life with his music. His truthful portrayal of human relationships, particularly involving women, was highly influenced by his own life experiences. Through these relationships he learned to create characters and music that clearly depict female sibling relationships in the eighteenth century. A review of educational opportunities for women during the eighteenth century, Mozart's personal relationships, as well as selected roles in his operas will help to explain Mozart's portrayal of the eighteenth-century female sibling stereotypes.

While Mozart's self-centeredness is well documented in biographies by Cliff Eisen and Ruth Halliwell, and the argument can be made that he surrounded himself with females who fulfilled his needs, he was often drawn to operas in which he could advocate musically for a female character's liberation from the overbearing influence of powerful men. Although Mozart's "musically empowered" women appear in nearly every opera, for the purpose of this paper, I will focus on the characters of *Così fan tutte's* Fiordiligi and Dorabella, and *Le Nozze di Figaro's* Countess.

While governments and social structure guided the careers of women in opera during the entire eighteenth century, some females were privileged to have a formative of influence over the composer with whom they worked. Throughout Mozart's life many women served as sources for his compositional inspiration; he

fulfilled his passion for music and drama was by creating tailor-made arias for the women he adored. “I like an aria to fit like a well-made suit of clothes” he said in a letter to his father in 1772.<sup>1</sup> Mozart loved nothing more than to see one of his compositions performed not only with technical facility but also with emotional honesty. Jane Glover wrote that “Mozart was a fierce taskmaster, who would never settle for anything less than total commitment to dramatic involvement and emotional truth. To sing beautifully was simply not enough.”<sup>2</sup> A handful of professional vocalists fit his expectations, so it is no wonder that Mozart eventually considered them to be adopted family members.

A large part of a young woman's education in eighteenth-century Europe was focused on training in the *arts d'agrément*, or pleasurable arts. For example, singing, dancing, harpsichord playing, drawing, and needlework were considered important parts of a proper lady's education. Reading, writing, geography and history were secondary, but still were introduced so that a lady could engage in conversation with a foreigner or a member of the court.<sup>3</sup> While women were educated through the arts, they were rarely given the opportunity to become professional musicians, though some, notably Marianne Martinez (4 May 1744-13 December 1812), did prevail. A general absence of opportunity prevailed throughout all of eighteenth-century Europe.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Jane Glover, *Mozart's Women*, trans. Anderson (New York: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2005),103.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.,190

<sup>3</sup> Frederick M.Keener and Susan E. Lorsch, ed., *Eighteenth Century Women and the Arts* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 237.

The Mozart family exemplified eighteenth-century norms and expectations for families and child prodigies. Maria Anna Walburga Ignatia Mozart (b Salzburg, 30/31 July 1751; d Salzburg, 29 Oct 1829 ), nicknamed Nannerl, was the first child of Leopold and Maria Anna to show exceptional musical talent. Her younger brother, Wolfgang, soon follow. Both Nannerl and Wolfgang were educated by their father, Leopold, and during their childhood the family showcased their musical talents by performing throughout Europe. During these concerts young Wolfgang showed such astonishing development, that in December 1769 Leopold obtained leave from his post in Salzburg, and decided that Anna Maria and Nannerl would no longer travel with them.<sup>4</sup> The reasoning behind his decision could be easily attributed to the social standards of the day; certainly, few families toured Europe with such young music sensations. This separation early in his life would prove to have a significant impact on Mozart and his individual relationships with family members, particularly Anna Maria and Nannerl.

Familial relationships that shaped Mozart's childhood become evident later in his life through the operatic characters he created. Liberation is a common theme found in Mozart's heroines, who are all forced to rediscover their inner strength by overcoming the dominance of powerful men. Mozart loved the women in his life and was highly influenced by them. The present focus will be on the relationships with his mother, Anna Maria, and sister, Nannerl. Their lives were dictated by the overbearing nature of Mozart's father, Leopold. Although

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<sup>4</sup> Ruth Halliwell, *The Mozart Family* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 137.



Leopold's decisions regarding his wife and daughter may have appeared only to affect them, the influence clearly is present in the characters for whom Mozart chooses to write.

## CHAPTER 2

### NANNERL MOZART

Maria Anna Walburga Ignatia Mozart (b Salzburg, 30/31 July 1751; d Salzburg, 29 Oct 1829 ), otherwise known as Nannerl, was five years Wolfgang's senior. When she was seven years old Leopold began giving her music lessons. Soon afterward, her father considered her one of the most skilled pianists in Europe.<sup>5</sup> At the age of three, Mozart was inspired by watching his sister play and wanted to begin music lessons. For teaching purposes, Leopold compiled a collection of his own compositions and those of other composers of the time. The book was intended for Nannerl; however, Mozart clearly learned from the same book since Leopold documented his son's progress on the back of each piece by writing the date and time he took to learn them.<sup>6</sup>

While the family toured Europe, the two children were extremely close and clearly shared a musical bond, but their love for each other ran far beyond music. They played constantly and lived as “king and queen” in their imaginary world which they called “Kingdom of Back.”<sup>7</sup> Their banter was typical of any close sibling relationship, and it persisted as a constant thread throughout their childhood.

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<sup>5</sup> Eva Rieger, (2) “Maria Anna (Walburga Ignatia) Mozart [Nannerl]”, *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy, <http://www.grovemusic.com> (Accessed 16 January 2008).

<sup>6</sup> Philip Downs, *Classical Music* (New York: W.W. Norton Company, 1992), 261.

<sup>7</sup> Maynard Solomon, *Mozart: A life* (New York: HarperCollins, 1995) , 399.

From 1762 to 1767, the entire family toured cities throughout Europe and the children performed as a sensational duo. Consequently, Mozart and Nannerl did not have the opportunity to make lasting friendships with other children, nor did either of them attend school. Beginning in 1769, the family began to live separately. Anna Maria (Mozart's Mother) and Nannerl would remain in Salzburg while Leopold and Wolfgang would travel Europe and focus on his son's career. Leopold's explanation was based on finances, but nevertheless the mother and daughter were distraught. As a mother, Anna Maria was forced to be separated from her husband and young son for weeks at a time, while eighteen-year-old Nannerl's musical talents were utterly marginalized.<sup>8</sup> Leopold's decision to send Nannerl home contradicted his ambitious and financially enterprising nature. She possessed the skills and training to join the ranks of other professional musicians and the Mozart family would have benefitted from any money Nannerl contributed to the household. Leopold did not disapprove of other female musicians, however. He taught and was otherwise acquainted with many professional female musicians. Margarethe Marchand (later Danzi, b.1768; d. 11 June 1800), for example, lived in the Mozart household, studied with Leopold, and composed a number of works that were published, reviewed, and

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<sup>8</sup> Jane Glover, *Mozart's Women*, trans. Anderson (New York: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2005), 33

sold.<sup>9</sup> Leopold's decision was especially devastating to eighteen-year-old Nannerl. Until now, Leopold's focus had seemingly been in favor of her brother. With this decision, undoubtedly, her musical talents were being cast aside. While the reasoning behind Leopold's decision is unknown, Nancy Reich suggests “the bourgeois musical culture that was developing in the late eighteenth century along with Leopold's acceptance of contemporary social conventions and his ambitions for upward mobility influenced his decision to keep his daughter from public appearances after adolescence. However, the author (Eva Reiger) does not discount his need for Nannerl to remain home and care for him.”<sup>10</sup>

Leopold and his son traveled to Italy on December 12, 1769. Mozart was almost fourteen, but had already traveled to Vienna, Munich, Paris, and London with his family. In spite of the exhausting schedule, Wolfgang wrote some forty letters to his mother and sister during this first trip away from them. Most of his writing consisted of postscripts added to his father's letters, addressed to Nannerl. These provide many examples of the siblings' close relationship. They are written in a very conversational tone, full of sibling banter, but record daily events. Wolfgang wrote from Milan on January 26, 1770:

I am truly delighted that you had such a good time at our sledding party, and I wish you a Thousand more such occasions for amusement so that you may be able to spend your life merrily. Only one thing troubles me and that is, you made Herr von Mölk sigh and suffer endlessly, and you didn't go sledding with him so that he might have a chance to toss you in the snow. I wonder how many handkerchiefs he used up that day because

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<sup>9</sup> Nancy Reich, review of *Nannerl Mozart: Leben einer Künstlerin im 18 Jahrhundert*, by Eva Rieger, *Notes-Quarterly Journal of the Music Library Association* 49:3 (March 1993) : 993

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

of you to dry his tears; he probably took an ounce of Weinstein beforehand to rid himself of all the horrible impurities of his body. I don't know anything new, except that Herr Gellert, the poet from Leipzig, died and after his death has written no more poetry. Just before I began this letter I finished an aria from Demetrio, which begins like this:

Misero Tu no sei:  
Tu spieghi il Tuo Dolore;  
e se non desti amore;  
Ritrovi almen pietà...

The opera in Mantua was nice, they played Demetrio, the prima donna's singing is good but too soft, and if you didn't see her act with her hands but only heard her sing, you would think she is not singing at all because she doesn't open her mouth and just whines everything out very softly, but this sort of thing is nothing new for us.<sup>11</sup>

Despite their physical distance, Wolfgang and Nannerl's bond remained strong. Numerous letters between the two document the confidences they shared during various stages of their lives.<sup>12</sup> Wolfgang encouraged his sister to marry for love despite their father's feelings. He even told her that if she chose not to marry she could join him in Vienna and make a very good living playing private concerts and teaching lessons.<sup>13</sup> Wolfgang loved his sister throughout his life and he turned to her for a more balanced opinion than he received from his father. Apparently desperate for familial support, he sought out her opinion when he decided to marry Constanze Weber (5 Jan 1762; d Salzburg, 6 March 1842) in 1782. Both Wolfgang and Constanze sent her letters and gifts to Nannerl in the

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<sup>11</sup> Trans. Spaethling and quoted in Spaethling, 7.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Spaethling, trans. and ed., *Mozart's Letters, Mozart's Life* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000), 24, 303.

<sup>13</sup> Emily Anderson, trans. and ed., *The Letters of Mozart and His Family*. 3rd ed. (London: MacMillan and Co., 1985), 766-77.

hope that they could win her approval. Knowing that Leopold Mozart would object to Constanze, he wrote to him hoping to win his approval:

I must make you better acquainted with the character of my dear Constanze. She is not ugly, but at the same time far from beautiful. Her whole beauty consists in two little black eyes and a pretty figure. She has no wit, but she has enough common sense to enable her to fulfill her duties as a wife and mother. It is a downright lie that she is inclined to be extravagant. On the contrary, she is accustomed to be shabbily dressed, for the little that her mother has been able to do for her children, she has done for the two others, but never for Constanze. True, she would like to be neatly and cleanly dressed, but not smartly, and most things that a woman needs she is able to make for herself; and she dresses her own hair every day.<sup>14</sup>

Mozart began a campaign of sorts seeking his family's approval of Constanze.

The family, particularly Leopold, had a negative view of the Weber family due to Mozart's previous relationship with Constanze's older sister, Aloysia, a professional singer of whom Leopold strongly disapproved. He wrote countless letters both to his sister and to his father carefully choosing the information he revealed to each of them. Mozart began confiding in Nannerl and even sent gifts (two caps which Constanze had made), and, from himself, his fantasy fugue in C major K394, for clavier. He wrote to his sister:

Most beloved sister!

My dear Konstanze has finally plucked up her courage and followed the dictates of her heart-that is to write you, my dear sister, a letter. If you should honor her, which I dearly wished you would so I could read her pleasure of receiving a letter from you on the forehead of this good creature, if you wish to honor her with a reply, please enclose it in a letter to me. I am saying this as a precaution, for you must know that her mother and sisters do not know that she wrote to you. I am including here a prelude and fugue for three parts; indeed, this is the very reason why I didn't answer you right away because I couldn't get finished any sooner, writing down all the wearisome little notes. Also, the whole thing

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<sup>14</sup> Anderson, L447, WM to N, 20 April 1782.

is written down incorrectly the Praeludio actually should be first, followed by the fugue. The reason for the mixup is this: I had already composed the fugue and was writing it down while I worked out the prelude in my head. I only hope that you 'll be able to read it (I wrote it so small), and of course, that you'll like it. I'll be sending you something better for the piano some other time.

Despite Mozart's efforts, Nannerl chose to remain compliant with her father's wishes and did not support her brother's marriage.<sup>15</sup> This renouncement created some detachment between Wolfgang and Nannerl, which was never resolved after Wolfgang's marriage to Constanze. The couple married on August 4, 1782, despite Leopold's endless objection.<sup>16</sup> The childhood closeness between Nannerl and her brother had diminished. After many years of Mozart asserting his independence from Leopold and Nannerl remaining loyal to him, the siblings were not able to maintain their strong ties.

Mozart must have felt abandoned by his sister, and angry that she repeatedly supported Leopold's judgment, despite her personal feelings. As children, Mozart and Nannerl's bond was strengthened by Leopold's overbearing nature and Anna Maria's role as the central care giver. Educated at home and touring Europe from an early age, neither Wolfgang or Nannerl had opportunities to make lasting friendships with children their own age.<sup>17</sup> Like any sibling relationship they too had rivalries. Nannerl began taking piano lessons from her father at age seven. When the family began to tour Europe, audiences wanted to hear Wolfgang play, and then perhaps Nannerl. Mozart's musical genius clearly

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<sup>15</sup> Glover, 121-122.

<sup>16</sup> Glover, 125.

<sup>17</sup> Steptoe, 123.

gained the highest approval from his father. Nannerl must have realized after Leopold chose to split the family and continue to tour with Mozart alone, that her musical talent would not win her father's consent, and she must find other means to earn his acceptance.

After Anna Maria's death on July 3, 1778, Nannerl was expected to fill her mother's role by serving as Leopold's companion, household manager, manager of students, second player in his duets, and fellow piano teacher. Prior to meeting the man who would become her husband, Nannerl was involved for over three years with Franz d'Ippold, the director of the school located next door to the Mozarts' apartment in Salzburg. Although it is not known why the relationship ended, one can assume that Leopold's disapproval may have been a factor. To this point in her life, Nannerl's existence had been one full of music, theatre, and Leopold. Nannerl lived with her father until she was thirty-three. Little is known about the events leading up to her marriage, but unlike her brother, she married a man of whom her father approved. She married Johann Baptist von Berchtold zu Sonnenburg (b 22 Oct 1736; d 26 Feb 1801). At the time of their marriage Berchtold was a government official and magistrate at St. Gilgen, her mother's birthplace. Nannerl moved to St. Gilgen and the couple lived in the house where her mother was born. Afterward, she lived her life according to her father's wishes.<sup>18</sup> Marriage drastically changed Nannerl's life. St. Gilgen was a small and remote town with very few people whose educational background was equal

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<sup>18</sup> Andrew Steptoe, review of *The Mozart Family: Four Lives in a Social Context*, by Ruth Halliwell, *Music & Letters* 80:1 (February 1999) p. 123-125



to hers. She was also responsible for five stepchildren between the ages of two and twelve who were unruly and uneducated. Her marriage was, in short, an existence she had never before experienced. The only link to her old life were the letters she exchanged with her father, which provided her with news of her Salzburg acquaintances and Wolfgang, new music, and, of course, his advice. Leopold was highly critical of her stepchildren and often made hurtful comments regarding Berchtold's stinginess and so-called pretensions, putting Nannerl in a position of divided loyalties.<sup>19</sup>

In 1784, Nannerl's marriage and departure to St. Gilgen left Leopold, for the first time, completely alone. He complained about the dullness of life in Salzburg and the lack of stimulating conversation. According to Ruth Halliwell, Leopold spoke of the exciting social and musical life he experienced during his visit with Wolfgang in Vienna in 1785. Nannerl apparently raised several objections to this visit for fear that he may choose to move to Vienna, leaving her even more isolated in St. Gilgen.<sup>20</sup>

Soon after Leopold's return from Vienna, Nannerl gave birth to her first son on July 27, 1785 in her father's home in Salzburg. 'Leopoldl', as he was called, was to remain with his grandfather and only saw his mother and father occasionally during visits from St. Gilgen. Some have theorized that Nannerl's reasoning for leaving her son with Leopold was two fold. She may have considered the child a second son to compensate for the loss of Wolfgang, the son

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Steptoe, 123-125.

who left home and sought independence from his father. Secondly, installing the child in Salzburg would give Nannerl an excuse to visit more often than her husband previously allowed.<sup>21</sup> Young Leopoldl was reunited with his mother permanently in May 1787, upon his grandfather's death.

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<sup>21</sup> Reich, 993.

## NANNERL'S INFLUENCE

Throughout Mozart's life, collaborations with singers proved to be important to his career. Jane Glover's book, *Mozart's Women*, discusses several collaborations with singers such as, Anna De Amicis (1733-1816), Maria Anna Fesemayr, Maria Anna Brauenhofer, Maria Magdalena Lipp (1745-1827) Aloysia Weber (1759-1839), and Nancy Storace (1765-1817). Glover discusses how Mozart musically tailored pieces for each of these women, and the lasting friendships that resulted from each collaboration.<sup>22</sup> In addition to his musical tailoring, Mozart was repeatedly chose libretti containing female characters who overcame adversity. Some of Mozart's greatest operatic writing was for heroines who fought for their beliefs despite the men who tried to keep them under their control, such as The Countess and Fiordiligi. Perhaps this influence came from the relationships Mozart witnessed in his own family. Nannerl was Mozart's older sister and first child in the Mozart family to show musical promise. During their childhood they toured Europe as child sensations, and were extremely close. Leopold's decision to split the family may have been beneficial for Mozart's career, but devastating to his childhood. Without Nannerl, he was completely immersed in an adult world full of professional musicians, royalty, and pressure.<sup>23</sup> This left little time to be a child.

Unlike the heroines in his operas, Nannerl chose to remain silent, never challenging her father's wishes so that she might live her life according to her own

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<sup>22</sup> Glover, 102-196.

<sup>23</sup> Steptoe, 124.

choices. Mozart, however, was also drawn to women who were responsible, prudent, and sensible, which perfectly describes his sister. The difference between Mozart's heroines and Nannerl is the ability to rise up and overcome whatever obstacle, or man, is attempting to control them, something that Nannerl never accomplished. Being the older sister, however, she remained faithful to being responsible, prudent, and sensible. Whether this was innately her nature or the role she accepted is unknown. She repeatedly chose the wishes of her father over her own, even when it involved Mozart. Nannerl was pious, she attended church daily and sometimes several times a day. She was also an avid theatre-goer.<sup>24</sup> “The virtuous daughter distinguished herself by scrupulous performance of duty, propriety, modesty, and unselfishness. She served the family peace and mediated conflicts. Neither independence nor learning were expected of the young woman.”<sup>25</sup> A person could understand how Mozart's view of Nannerl was one of defeat. By choice or default, she succumbed to Leopold and lived her life to gain his approval.

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<sup>24</sup> Reich, 993

<sup>25</sup> Trans. and quoted in Reich, 993.

## CHAPTER 3

### ANNA MARIA MOZART

Anna Maria Mozart (December 25, 1720-July 3, 1778), Wolfgang's mother, devoted her life to her husband and children. In keeping with their era, location, and social class, Leopold made all the decisions for their family, primarily based on financial opportunities, and Anna Maria was responsible for taking whatever measures necessary to ensure their success. While this may be viewed as a traditional role for a mother, Anna Maria was challenged with keeping her family connected through a lifetime of traveling, fame, sickness, and financial turmoil. As a balance to Leopold's autocratic personality, Anna Maria was known for her sense of humor, a trait she shared with her son.<sup>26</sup>

When her children were young, and the entire family was touring Europe, the Mozart family typically created a home in the city where the children were to be performing. In April 1764, the family left Paris and relocated to London, where they stayed for fifteen months.<sup>27</sup> This was a period of great musical growth for the children, particularly Wolfgang, who continued to develop at an astonishing rate. As summer arrived, the setbacks began. The people of London cleared the city for the summer months and opportunities for private concerts disappeared. Then, Leopold became ill. He had developed infections throughout his body and nervous system and it was now necessary for the family to leave the

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<sup>26</sup> Glover, 13.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 22.

center of the city and move to the country (what is now Ebury Street, in Chelsea).<sup>28</sup>

This period must have brought great distress to Anna Maria, since she became solely responsible for the family, the move to Chelsea, nursing Leopold back to health, even taking over the cooking. She gained rare praise from her husband in a letter to Herr Haugenauer, their Salzburg landlord, on September 13, 1764.

“My wife has had a great deal to do lately on account of my illness...In Chelsea we had our food sent to us at first from an eating-house; but as it was so poor, my wife began to do our cooking, and we are now in such good trim that when we return to town next week we shall continue to do our own housekeeping. Perhaps too my wife, who has become very thin, will get a little fatter.”<sup>29</sup>

When Leopold decided that the family would no longer tour together, Anna Maria and Nannerl suffered a great deal. Anna Maria would no longer be directly involved with her son's daily life and witness his development. Wolfgang was only thirteen when he and Leopold set off on their first Italian journey without Anna Maria and Nannerl, and without his mother there to provide any sort of nurturing, his primary focus would be that of his father's, making music and money. Leopold wrote home regularly, but mostly his letters were critical of her home management in his absence or full of enthusiasm about the wonderful cities, food, royalty, and culture he and Wolfgang were experiencing.<sup>30</sup> This must have been extremely hurtful to not only be excluded from all of the events that

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>29</sup> Anderson, L31, LM to Hagenauer, 13 September 1764.

<sup>30</sup> Glover, 36.

she once was a part of, but to be constantly criticized for the role she was forced to accept by maintaining the household in Salzburg.

The years between 1769 and 1777 brought many trips for Leopold and Mozart. They traveled from their home in Salzburg to cities all over Europe while Mozart composed and performed his compositions.<sup>31</sup> Anna Maria remained with Nannerl in the family's Salzburg home, until 1778 when the roles were finally reversed. Mozart was having a difficult time securing consistent income in Salzburg, and Leopold felt it was time to search elsewhere. Leopold was employed by the Archbishop and was not granted permission to accompany his son on a proposed trip to Paris, therefore, Leopold decided that Anna Maria should accompany Wolfgang on his travels.<sup>32</sup> They planned to return to Munich, Mannheim, and Paris, since Leopold believed that one of these cities would employ the young composer. In 1778 Anna Maria was given the opportunity, once again, to travel and care for her son as he searched for a fruitful appointment.<sup>33</sup>

Anna Maria was willing to fulfill any role needed by her family. She was willing to sacrifice her own happiness to serve her family by whatever means required. Anna Maria had longed to travel with her son again, and as their journey together began, she wrote cheerfully to her husband,

“Thank God, we are in good trim and only wish that you were with us, which, with God's help, will happen some day. Meanwhile, do not worry,

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<sup>31</sup> Downs, 143-238

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 300.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

and shake off all your troubles. Everything will come right in the end, when the hooks and eyes have been put on. We lead a most charming life – up early – late to bed, and visitors all day long. Addio ben mio.”<sup>34</sup>

Although this decision required separating her family again, she probably imagined that her brilliant son would secure a position in a very short period of time, and they would all soon be reunited. Unfortunately, this was not to be. After traveling through Munich, Augsburg, and Mannheim without obtaining any permanent employment, the mother and son pushed on to Paris.<sup>35</sup>

Wolfgang and his mother arrived in Paris on March 23, 1778.<sup>36</sup> The high hopes that the Mozart family had for Wolfgang's future in Paris were never realized. In constant search for employment, Wolfgang frequently left his mother alone in their dark, drafty lodgings, where Maria Anna complained that she never could see the sun and was constantly chilled. In a letter to Leopold she wrote,

“Wolfgang is lunching with Herr Wendling today, December 7. So I am at home alone, as I usually am, and have to put up with the most horrible cold. For even if they light a small fire, they never put any more coal on it, so that when it burns out, the room gets cold again. So I make them light one in the morning, when we get up, and another in the evening. During the day I have to put up with dreadful cold. As I write I can hardly hold my pen, I am freezing so.”<sup>37</sup>

Over the next four months, Anna Maria's health steadily declined. After her death on July 3, 1778, Mozart was faced with delivering the devastating news to his father and sister in Salzburg. He first wrote to Leopold informing him that his mother was very ill, and while the doctors did not despair, he had given up hope.

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<sup>34</sup> Anderson, L209a, MA to LM, 26 September 1777.

<sup>35</sup> Halliwell, 289.

<sup>36</sup> Downs, 301.

<sup>37</sup> Anderson, L256a MA to LM, 603.



He then continued to write in a conversational tone about the music and opportunities in Paris. Later that night he wrote a second letter to a Salzburg friend asking that they share the news of her death personally, in his absence, with his family and that it be conveyed most gently and carefully.<sup>38</sup> Later that month, Leopold wrote to his son asking for a more detailed account of his mother's death. The response written to Leopold reveals the most terrifying experience of young Wolfgang's life.

The first letter brought tears of anguish to my eyes-because it brought back the memories of the sad day of my dear mother's passing-everything stood before me once again in full vividness; I shall not forget it as long as live-you know I had never seen anybody die, although I had wanted to, and then, when I experienced it for the first time, it had to be my mother.

Later in the letter he describes his mother's passing:

You are asking for a short description of the illness and all the details? I shall give it to you, I ask only that I may be brief and give you only the essentials; for one thing, it's all behind us now and cannot be changed anymore and, for another, I must save a little room for writing about things that concern our present situation. So then, first of all let me tell you that my dear mother *had* to die-no physician in the world could have saved her this time-it was clearly god's will.<sup>39</sup>

Philip Downs believes that Anna Maria's death led Mozart to a heightened musical maturity. "One has a feeling here that there is now no height or depth that Mozart was not able to reach, and whatever he wished to accomplish in music he could achieve."<sup>40</sup> In late September Mozart left Paris and returned home to Salzburg, but felt very confused about his immediate future.

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<sup>38</sup> Related in Downs, 302.

<sup>39</sup> Spaethling, 174, WM to LM, 31 July 1778.

<sup>40</sup> Downs, 303.

Anna Maria was a selfless woman who supported her family without hesitation. She did whatever was required of her and was always there to mend the outcome of Leopold's imperious decisions. Her altruistic nature must have been a great comfort to Wolfgang, knowing that there was one person in his life that would support and love him without condition. Her death was the beginning of his separation from Leopold and Nannerl, since he no longer had the supportive presence of his mother, and Nannerl was forced, or perhaps chose, to side with her father in the coming years. Her steadfast love and endless loyalty were qualities that he would later immortalize through character portrayals in his operas.

## CHAPTER 4

### COSÌ FAN TUTTE-FIORDILIGI AND DORABELLA

Mozart was drawn to libretti that gave him the opportunity to musically transform and empower operatic women. Although there were many characteristics that he admired about his mother and sister, throughout his life they were never able to overcome his father's overbearing reign. In *Così fan tutte*, Fiordiligi's resilience, inner strength, loyalty, and faithfulness are all shared qualities he admired in Anna Maria. Both women are protective, steadfast, and always compassionate. The difference lies in the outward strength Fiordiligi shows in fending off the Albanians. Unlike Anna Maria, Fiordiligi is clearly not afraid of speaking very assertively to the strange men when they make advances. She protects herself and her sister and without hesitation.

Fiordiligi's relationship with Dorabella may be interpreted as reflecting two different elements of Mozart's family dynamics. First, the closeness of the sisters is reminiscent of Mozart's childhood relationship with Nannerl. While they were touring Europe as a family, Mozart and Nannerl were inseparable. Even after the family was separated we see the closeness between the siblings through their letters, as evidenced earlier. Fiordiligi, unlike Nannerl, protected her younger sister and constantly looked out for her well being. She was not afraid to defend Dorabella, even to strangers. There is not evidence that Nannerl challenged Leopold's decisions, nor supported Mozart as he sought independence from his father. Again, Mozart must have felt abandoned by his sister when she chose to side with Leopold throughout her life, even until his death. Secondly,

Dorabella represents an emotional freedom that neither Anna Maria or Nannerl showed. She was never afraid to show her emotions, no matter how extreme. Dorabella was given the freedom to express herself and took great pleasure in experiencing all life had to offer. No limitations were placed on her, no boundaries; her life was not dictated by propriety, responsibilities, or guilt, only by her desires. In Da Ponte's libretto, Mozart certainly saw the beauty in this state of mind, and may have wished that he, Anna Maria, and Nannerl could have experienced more of it in their own lives.

Mozart's musical genius went far beyond adding music to a libretto. He was able to add dramatic layers to the characters through his compositional techniques. In *Così fan tutte* he established Fiordiligi and Dorabella as sisters from their first entrances by making the interval of a third as a recurring figure in the sisters' duets. In their first duet, "Ah guarda, sorella" the woodwinds introduce the melody in thirds as the strings play an accompaniment figure, also in thirds (Example 1). After a short introduction, Fiordiligi begins by singing to her sister. The girls admire the lockets they are wearing, ones adorned with pictures of their handsome fiancés. Fiordiligi's first melody is introduced by the woodwinds. Dorabella's response is a variation of this melody, different but recognizably the same, very much reflective of their relationship as sisters. The fact that Fiordiligi introduces all the musical material and Dorabella's lines are virtual restatements of Fiordiligi's ideas, musically confirms the stereotypical positions of the older and younger sister. They sing back and forth to one another, pointing out their favorite features of their beloved soldiers.

Example 1 (“Ah, guarda, sorella” Act 1, scene II, No. 4, mm. 1-10).<sup>41</sup>



The sisters finally join each other and sing ‘Felice son io, io sono felice!’ (I am happy, I am happy!) (Example 2). In this duet, they join in thirds on the word *amore* (love) which is sustained over four beats followed by a fermata by both voices and a short ornament. They repeat the word *amore* while sustaining in thirds over two measures. This time the ornament is extended and the final descending line echoes a long romantic sigh.

The duet continues and the sisters take turns singing the melody as the other maintains the same note for eight and a half measures. The text coincides: ‘Se questo mio core mai cangia desio, Amore, Amore mi faccia vivendo penar’ (If ever my heart should change its affections, may love condemn me to a life of anguish).

<sup>41</sup> W.A. Mozart, *Così fan tutte*, Libretto by Lorenzo Da Ponte. Milano: Ricordi, 2000.

Example 2 (“Ah, guarda, sorella” Act 1, scene II, No. 4, mm. 49-73)<sup>42</sup>

FIORDILIGI

*a piacere* (29)

Si ve.de un sem.bian.te guer.rie - ro ed a -

Do.

sem.bran scoe.car.

Fi.

- man - te.

Do.

Si ve.de u - na fac.cia, che al.let.ta, che al.let.ta, che al.

8

Do.

- letta e mi.nac - cia, e mi.nac - cia, e mi.nac -

Do.

FIORDILIGI

Fe.li.ce son i - o, fe.li-ce son i - o!

Do.

- cia. Io so.no, io so.no fe.li - ce!

9

Allegro

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., score.

The sustained note falls on the word *penar*, or anguish. Mozart allows the characters to wallow in this state over eight measures and an extended crescendo. Following this, the two rejoin in thirds and each finishes the duet by declaring their faithfulness and steadfast love for her betrothed.

The sisters' signature interval appears again in the trio, "*Soave sia il vento*" (May the wind be gentle), as Fiordiligi, Dorabella and Don Alfonso are saying goodbye to Guglielmo and Ferrando as they leave for "battle".

In this extreme moment of sadness, the strings introduce the trio with a rocking sixteenth-note pattern that is written in thirds.

The women sing in parallel motion while Don Alfonso has a descending bass line that functions much as a continuo line. The sisters have a stunning overlapping line that Dorabella begins on '*ed ogni elemento*' which again reveals their closeness, as if Fiordiligi is finishing her sister's thought. Following this, all three voices hold an A major chord on '*desir*' as the strings return with the sixteenth-note pattern in harmonic thirds (Example 3). The text '*risponda ai nostril desir*' (respond to our wishes) is the only text used on the last two pages. Fiordiligi and Dorabella wish for their fiancés safe return while Don Alfonso knows the charade is just beginning.

Example 3 (“Soave sia il vento” Act I, Scene VI, No. 10, mm. 21-23)<sup>43</sup>



Mozart defines the sisterly connection best in the Act I finale. The opening is reminiscent of their first duet “Ah guarda sorella”. The girls are awestruck, pondering how one moment could change their fates, recalling the moment their fiancés left for battle. The orchestra once again introduces the sisters in thirds and continues to accompany them using the signature interval. The two sing in harmony throughout the entire duet, except when Fiordiligi introduces a line which Dorabella shortly joins. Mozart’s vocal writing is paralleled in the staging of this section; the sisters are clinging to one another for reassurance. After Scena XV, when the Albanians arrive after drinking the fatal tonic, the sisters do not sing separately until the end of the scene. Their thoughts, questions, horror, and disbelief are all expressed as a twosome. During this scene they are also physically attached, moving in tandem, clinging to each other for safety. Little do

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., score.



they know that the feared Albanians are their own fiancés, Guglielmo and Ferrando.

As the Albanians collapse to the floor after taking poison, Fiordiligi and Dorabella shriek for assistance from their maid, Despina. After pretending to assess the situation, of which she is already fully aware, Despina begins to instruct the sisters on treatments for the ailing Albanians. A great musical and dramatic transition occurs when the sisters once again begin singing individually. As Fiordiligi sings the line ‘In momenti sì dolente, chi potriali abbandonar?’ (In moments so painful who could abandon them?), she reveals the first sign of her heart softening towards the Albanians. Nearing the end of the scene, Mozart ends the chain of duet writing as both characters begin to overcome their fears and show a small spark of interest towards the odd Albanian situation.

Nevertheless, after a brief wooing, the sisters regain their senses and begin trying to ward off the Albanians’ advances. Mozart returns to writing for the duo and as tensions build, the sisters begin singing extended sections of coloratura and highly syllabic writing. The frantic tempo that is introduced at the end of this lengthy finale provides a great challenge for the singers performing this piece. This compositional technique creates great emotional intensity between the characters. During this section as Fiordiligi and Dorabella sing extended measures in a high tessitura and long sections of rapid coloratura. Physical and vocal pacing is essential in this piece, especially considering that there is a challenging act ahead still to be performed.

Mozart's masterful character development paints a very colorful portrayal of the individual characters, whether they are singing together or independently. The first act arias that Fiordiligi and Dorabella sing only solidify what we experience through their ensemble singing. For example, in Dorabella's recitative and aria, "Ah scostati" and "Smanie implacabili", the text alone illustrates her flare for exaggerated rage and suffering.

*Recitative:*

*Ah! scostati! Paventa il tristo effetto d'un disperato affetto! Chiudi quelle finestre; odio la luce, odio l'aria che spiro odio me stessa. Chi schernisce il mio duol, chi mi consola? Deh, fuggi, per pietà! Lasciami sola!*

*Aria:*

*Smanie implacabilil, che m'agitte, dentro quest'anima più non cessate, finchè l'angoscia mi fa morir. Eempio misero d'amor funesto, darò all'Eumenidi, se viva resto, col suono orribile de' miei sospir.*

*Recitative:*

[Ah! Get out of my way! Beware the sad consequence of a desperate love! Close those windows; I hate the light, I hate the air I breathe, I hate myself. Who mocks my grief, who consoles me? Ah, flee, for mercy's sake! Flee, flee, for mercy's sake! Let me be alone!]

*Aria:*

[Implacable desires, which are torturing me, do not leave this soul of mine until my anguish makes me die. If I remain alive, I shall show the Furies a miserable example of fatal love, with the horrible sound of my sighing.]<sup>44</sup>

(Act I sc.8 no. 11)

The triplet figuration in the accompaniment, coupled with the tempo marking 'allegro agitato,' sets a frenetic pace for the aria from the outset. An example of Mozart's text painting occurs in this aria as a long, chromatic line stretches over the text 'col suono orribile' followed by 'de' miei sospir'. Mozart extends the

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<sup>44</sup> W.A. Mozart, *Così fan tutte*, PolyGram Records, 1994, compact disc.

chromaticism through a high g and g-flat, right in the middle of the vocal passagio, a difficult range for most mezzo-sopranos. The extended notes occur on the word 'orribile' or horrible, and are followed by a rhythmic gesture that he often uses in his writing, a quarter-note followed by an eighth-note and then, an eighth-rest, when repeated multiple times sounds like a sigh (Example 4). Of course the word that is repeated over this rhythmic pattern is 'sospir' or sighing. The underlying joke is that the singer is breathing a sigh of relief after finishing the difficult passage. For Dorabella it is another opportunity for an over dramatic outburst and a brilliant display of a musical and emotional eruption.

Example 4 (“Smanie implacabili” Act I, Scene VIII, No. 11, mm. 27-38)<sup>45</sup>

Mozart gives Fiordiligi an opportunity to assert herself as the stabilizing force of the household when she sings her aria, “Come scoglio”.

She takes a stand after a frenzy of non compliance from the Albanians as she is trying to get them out of her house. The aria reflects Fiordiligi’s strong,

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., score.

unwavering devotion to her fiancé and makes the audience fully aware that she is the person in charge. With bold intervallic leaps and intense sections of coloratura, her music supports her attempts to drive the strangers out of the house.

*Recitative*

*Temerari! Sortite fuori di questo loco! E non profani l'alito infausto degli infami detti nostro cor, nostro orecchio e nostril affetti! Invan per voi, per gli altri, invan si cerca le nostre alme sedur. L'intatta fede, che per noi già si diede ai cari amanti, saprem loro serbar infino a morte, a dispetto del mondo e della sorte!*

*Aria*

*Come scoglio immoto resta contra i venti e la tempesta, così ognor quest'alma è forte nella fede e nell'amor. Con noi nacque quella face che ci piace e ci consola e porrà la morte sola far che cangi affetto il cor. Rispettate, anime ingrati, questo esempio di costanze, e una barbara speranza non vi renda audaci an cor.*

*Recitative*

[Reckless men! Leave this place! And do not let the ill-omened air of scandalous utterances profane our hearts, our ears and our affections! It is useless for you, or for any other, to try and seduce our souls. The steadfast faith which we gave to our dear lovers, we shall preserve until death, despite the world and destiny!]

*Aria*

[Like a rock stands firm against winds and storms, so this soul will always be strong in its fidelity and its love. In us is kindled the fire that brings delight and comfort and only death can make us change our affections. Ungrateful men, honour this example of fidelity, and may no more uncouth hopes make you bold.]<sup>46</sup>

(Act I sc. 11 no.14)

Mozart presents many technical challenges in this aria; intervallic leaps of twelfths and thirteenths, an extended section of coloratura in triplet figuration, and the complete range of this aria spans over two octaves. Within all of these technical challenges lies an even greater challenge for the singer; the delicate

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.,CD.

balance between giving a fully engaged performance and giving so much dramatically that one cannot sustain the piece vocally. The technical demands of this aria constantly test this balance, just as Fiordiligi herself is being emotionally challenged. She remains devoted, proud, and unwavering in her belief that loyalty and goodness comes above everything else.

The second act arias offer a very different perspective of both characters. Fiordiligi's second act aria, "Per pietà", reflects a much more heartfelt and forlorn character. The aria is written in a very low tessitura for sopranos which allows for the more hidden part of Fiordiligi's personality to emerge. In her solitude she is allowed to show fear and uncertainty as she doubts her faithfulness and courage. Dorabella's "È amore un ladroncello" is influenced by Despina and her musical style, flirtatious and carefree. Dorabella still doesn't think for herself and has switched from one master to another, Fiordiligi to Despina. By the end of the opera Fiordiligi and Dorabella return to singing in thirds. Dorabella has created such chaos, she finally returns to her original allegiance to Fiordiligi.

These depictions of emotional turmoil recall what seems to have been a very unpredictable life for the females closest to Mozart during his childhood adolescence. Leopold Mozart's disruptive family decisions must surely have caused periodic emotional conflict for Anna Maria and Nannerl. For Nannerl this included dictating the beginning and ending of her career, whom and when she married, and even leaving her son for the first two years of his life. Anna Maria was told when she was allowed to travel with Mozart, was criticized for how she handled the family business in Leopold's absence, and faced her death in Paris,

away from her home, because Leopold wouldn't allow his son to travel alone. Wolfgang also experienced Leopold's domineering nature in his early years; however, marrying Constanze was a turning point in his battle to break away from his father's control. Surely Mozart's empathy for these Da Ponte characters, particularly Fiordiligi, was affected by the struggles he watched his mother and sister face throughout their lives. On many occasions, Anna Maria and Nannerl seem to have wanted one life, but Leopold, together with societal expectations of propriety, dictated that they live another. This theme recurs in many of the libretti Mozart chose to set; particularly, the Countess in *Le nozze di Figaro*. As she transitions from the young Rosina to a noble station as Countess, Mozart introduces another family-inspired theme, the power of transformation.

## CHAPTER 5

### LE NOZZE DI FIGARO-THE COUNTESS

From the French writer Pierre-Augustin Beaumarchais came two charming stage comedies, *Le barbier de Séville, ou La precaution inutile* (1773) and *La folle journée, ou Le mariage de Figaro* (1778). Both comedies lent themselves extremely well to musical setting and in 1785, Mozart and librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte began transforming the second play into an opera libretto entitled *Le nozze di Figaro*.<sup>47</sup>

In Beaumarchais's *Le barbier de Séville* Count Almaviva wooed Bartolo's ward, Rosina, with the aid of Figaro, his valet. Rosina, who has become the Countess Almaviva in the opera *Le nozze di Figaro*, began her character in *Le barbier* as a young girl, full of life, with a strong, independent mind. Rosina was continually creating mischief and a great part of her allure was her immense wit and charm. The beginning of *Le nozze di Figaro's* second act opens with the Countess's aria, "Porgi amor qualche ristoro", which reveals the once vivacious Rosina now full of despair and contemplating her failing marriage. The Countess is lonely, introverted, and despondent throughout much of the opera. "Porgi amor" is a short but demanding aria that immediately wins the audience's support and compassion. She is fully aware of her husband's philandering, and she endures every incidence that is revealed to her with an icy sense of dignity.

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<sup>47</sup> Walter E. Rex, 'Beaumarchais, Pierre-Augustin', *Grove Music Online* (Accessed 26 February 2008).



Privately, of course, she suffers dearly and wonders how her life could have changed so drastically in such a short time.

The introverted Countess can be compared to Nannerl, being fully aware of her father's choices and how they would affect her, yet, maintaining her sense of dignity and accepting her position. A woman's sense of duty to her family can be painfully strong, especially when it is forced to come before her own happiness. Another parallel may be drawn between the transformation from young Rosina to the Countess, and the child performer Nannerl to Leopold's substitute wife, Nannerl. Both young girls experienced having the vibrant, spirited personalities of their childhood overshadowed by men who sought to serve only themselves, resulting in two sullen and introspective adult women.

Mozart witnessed his sister live her life according to her father's expectations, regardless of her own aspirations or feelings. Leopold chose the path for her, not allowing her to pursue a musical career or marry the man she loved. Nannerl chose, as many females of the eighteenth century did, to fulfill their family's wishes. The question arises, did these women have a choice? Unusual women, like Jane Austen, broke free from societal expectations, chose to live alone, and struggled to use writing as a source of income. Women still struggle with these choices today, although choosing independence does not carry the same stigma that women of the eighteenth century era encountered. Certainly, either choice came with its own set of consequences.

Unlike Nannerl, the Countess experiences a rebirth when she decides to turn the tables on the Count. With the help of Susanna, her servant and dear

friend, they devise, in Rosina's former style, a scheme to have Susanna lure the Count into a late-night secret meeting. What the Count will not know is that the two women will have exchanged cloaks and his secret encounter will, in fact, be with his wife. This is the first indication that the Countess has decided to fight for her marriage and no longer accept her husband's devious behavior.

One of the greatest examples of this transformation occurs in the Countess's recitative "E Susanna non vien" (And Susanna is not here) and aria, "Dove Sono i bei momenti" (Where are the beautiful moments). At the beginning of the scene, the Countess anxiously awaits the arrival of Susanna, who will report of whether or not the Count has fallen for their ploy. The Countess is edgy and nervous and her tensions quickly turn into fear of her sometimes irrational and jealous husband. Jane Glover provides wonderful insight to the recitative:

She tries to calm herself down: 'Ma che mal c'è?' (But what harm are we doing). But as she runs through the whole plan again, that she must change clothes with Susanna, under cover of darkness, she suddenly breaks. 'O cielo! A qual umil stato fatale io son ridotta da un consorte crudel' (To what humiliation have I been reduced by a cruel husband); and in her despair she charts the dissolution of her marriage:

*...che dopo avermi  
Con un misto inaudito  
D'infedeltà, di gelosie, di sdegni,  
Prima amata, indi offesa, e alfin tradita  
Fammi or cercar da una mia serva aita.*

[In a strange mixture of infidelity,  
jealousy and disdain,  
first he loved me, then neglected  
and finally deceived me.  
Now he forces me to seek help from my own servant.]

This ‘servant’ is Susanna: her friend, her devoted supporter. But at this moment of utter desolation, the Countess can see her only as an underling, to whom begging for help constitutes the worst social solecism.”<sup>48</sup>

With a sudden shift in emotion, the Countess begins her aria “Dove sono i bei momenti” (Where are the beautiful moments), requiring a quick vocal shift to a well-spun, cantabile line. This aria requires immense breath control and vocal pacing in order to successfully deliver the dramatic transformation that must later occur. The beginning of this aria finds the Countess once again nostalgic for happier times. There is a painful simplicity in this difficult aria that once again reminds the audience of the Countess’s loneliness and grieving. As she recalls sentimental moments, a mournful oboe finishes her lines for her, remembering lost happiness. She repeats the beginning of the aria, this time with the absence of breaths between connecting phrases, and then suddenly a new thought occurs to her:

*Ah! Se almen la mia costanza  
Nel languire amando agnor  
Mi portasse una speranza  
Di cangiar l’ingrato cor!*

[Ah! If only my constancy  
in always yearning for him  
could bring me the hope  
of changing his ungrateful heart!]

At this moment, Mozart has created not only a complete musical shift, but the Countess has broken away from her sorrow and nostalgia and has decided that there is hope for her happiness (Example 5). The first tentative idea turns into an allegro section that reflects her new, optimistic outlook. The aria ends in triumph

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<sup>48</sup> Glover, 255.

and a sense that the Countess has recovered her strength. For the remainder of the opera she remains poised, calm, and controlled.

Example 5 (Act III, Scene VI, No. 42, mm. 76-89)<sup>49</sup>

Example 5 is a musical score for Act III, Scene VI, No. 42, measures 76-89. It is a vocal and piano piece in C major, 4/4 time, marked ALLEGRO. The lyrics are: "Ah! se al-men la mia co-stan-za nel lan-gui-re aman-do o-gnor mi por-tas-se u-na spe-ran-za di can-giar l'ingra-to cor, di can-giar..... l'in-gra-to cor!". The score is written for voice and piano. The voice part is in the upper staff, and the piano part is in the lower staff. The piano part features a prominent bass line with many sixteenth notes, and the voice part has a melodic line with some grace notes. The score is marked with 'f' (forte) and 'p' (piano) dynamics.

Although the Countess and Susanna are not biological sisters, their relationship has sisterly moments. Despite their class differences, they always

<sup>49</sup> W.A. Mozart. *Le Nozze di Figaro*. Libretto by Lorenzo Da Ponte. Milano: Ricordi, 1996.

speak to each other as equals and trust one another completely. Susanna's mischievous spirit helps to pull the Countess out of her depression and renews her vivacious character. This evolution is reminiscent of Mozart's own relationship with Nannerl, with two very different outcomes. As children, Nannerl was Mozart's best friend, confidante, and the only link to a typical childhood. Nannerl was an extremely talented musician, whom Mozart recognized throughout his life by sending her his own compositions and encouraging her to continue playing in spite of his father's demands that forced her to focus elsewhere. Like the Countess, Nannerl began as a fun-loving, spirited young girl with a world full of opportunities ahead of her. When these two young women reached a marriageable age, societal expectations were enforced upon them by men who felt it was in their best interest to live by these cultural standards.

Through her two arias, "Porgi amor" and "Dove sono", the Countess mourns her past and longs to reclaim the spirit that once defined her independence. Nannerl, unfortunately, was never able to overcome her father's influence and lived her entire life serving his needs and living by his expectations. Mozart was reminded of her servitude throughout his life, and must have felt isolated from his family, particularly after his mother's death, as Nannerl consistently chose to side with her father on all family issues. The Countess showed great wit and determination by devising a brilliantly executed scheme in order to teach her husband a well deserved lesson. Mozart certainly appreciated the humor brought forth by this strategy, but more importantly, he was inspired by the Countess's ability to reclaim her dignity and spirit, something he never

witnessed in his sister.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

In summation, social and political influences of the eighteenth century directly influenced how women lived their lives. A cultural food chain of sorts was created by which one power fed on the next. In other words, the amount and type of education women received was dictated by societal expectations, which led to a pre-destined career path, and usually determined marital prospects. These factors greatly affected responsibilities within the birth order and essentially shaped individual personalities. Nannerl's exceptional musical talent was laid aside, bowing to familial and societal demands. As evidenced by the Mozart family, Nannerl bore the responsibility of maintaining the home, while Wolfgang was allowed to explore his musical talents and pursue a career. The cultural "food chain" continued to thrive as long as it was fed by social acceptance. Over an extended period of time, new ideas, schools, and career opportunities for young girls were introduced which eventually led to adaptations within the chain.

In the eighteenth century, however, cultural stereotypes were directly reflected through both stage and literature. Mozart drew upon examples from his own life to create his stunningly accurate female character portrayals, which is one of the most notable aspects of his operatic writing. The insight into his characters, particularly women, is brilliantly represented in both *Così fan tutte* and *Le Nozze di Figaro* through Fiordiligi, Dorabella, and the Countess. Audience members and singers alike have identified with elements of all of their personalities throughout the centuries. This commonality has helped to secure

their presence in the modern operatic repertoire. Also, since Mozart chose these characters, and composed music, based on his own familial relationships only deepens the connection that audiences feel for them. Everyone longs for such a relationship in their lives, or are reminded of one that already exists. Mozart's musical genius only punctuates the treasured characters that live long after their time on stage.

Presenting stereotypes through the arts is a direct representation of societal expectation and influence. Whether it is represented through music or an accurate illustration of everyday life, it is an essential record of cultural history. Mozart's ability to capture the insights of women and their relationships, coupled with his music, creates not only a record, but an experience, an art. He was able to "musically empower" the women in his operas, something that he was not able to accomplish in his own family. Several centuries of women have felt this empowerment, and are most grateful.



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